

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is an American festival in the truest sense. Until recently it was popular in New England where it originated in the devout religious feeling of the Pilgrims who recognized God as the immediate cause of all their blessings. When their first harvest was gathered after two years of toil, they gratefully scanned it as a gift from God and their governor appointed a day for the public expression of their thankfulness. The custom thus founded was continued through the colonial days, and after the revolution the governors of the New England states continued to appoint an annual Thanksgiving day. During the revolution a national Thanksgiving was appointed annually by congress and after the adoption of the constitution Washington appointed a national Thanksgiving, believing as he said that no other nation had been so evidently protected by the divine favor. With the emigration of the descendants of the Pilgrims to the west this festival has been carried with other features of New England life though in a modified spirit into the newer states. Some recent experiences in our national history, combined with the sense of its own propriety and worth have at last spread it over the whole country and made it a national rather than a local festival.

It has been from the first a family festival rather than a festival of the church according to the Protestant idea which centers religion in the home rather than in the church and it has tended to perpetuate here the old Anglo-Saxon fondness for family and home, which was characteristic of that race in its early life on the borders of the North. These people comprised the family as hardly any other people do and much that is best and dearest in our material life to-day is the inheritance of that family spirit which lay at the foundation of our civil and religious institutions. The annual Thanksgiving festival has been the appropriate symbol of this family spirit from the beginning of our life. It has been in the home and at the fireside rather than at the place of public worship that the peculiar impressiveness of the day has been exerted. In the family reunions, at the annual homecoming to which the children who have gone out from home, and in their turn raised up families of their own rally back from year to year, the fact has been recognized and impressed upon children and grand children that they all belonged to an older and a higher household, and that the family feeling has been kept alive to strengthen the fabric of national unity, stability and virtue. It is the festival of the heart and the home and it should be observed as it has been in fact.

The question is how can the convicts be apportioned at least expense to the state. The green back labor party, socialists, which is reigning over the rest of the country in New York, declared in their platform that no mechanical work ought to be done in the prisons, and that all work assigned by prisoners in excess of the cost of their support should be paid to their families or to themselves at the expiration of their terms. But if the prisoners are furnished all mechanical employment they must resort to unskilled labor and here they will come in competition—so far as they can compete—with a class less able to bear it. If the prisoners are to be kept out of mechanical employments and to labor is not to be let to contractors but to individuals there is small probability that there will be any sum earned by them in excess of the cost of their support. I pay over to no body.

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A GOOD EXAMPLE

The town of Clatsop in eastern Washington has set an example which every other in the northwest ought to follow. The people have subscribed money—not a great sum—for the maintenance of an "immigrant house" in which new comers are given free lodging and free information respecting the opportunities for settlement, either upon vacant government or railroad lands or by purchase of improved farms. The immigrant house has become a center of information, and has already been the means of attracting a considerable settlement to the region tributary to Cheney. Every person who settles in the neighborhood of a town adds something to its business and every hundred settlers adds considerably to its population. For example, the towns of eastern Washington are growing rapidly because the country about them is being settled up dry and the towns of the Willamette valley are almost standing still because their business fields are not new populations. Albany in Linn county, is not more prosperous now than two years ago, but if a thousand immigrants should find homes in the unoccupied land west of her during the next twelve months, her business would increase 15 or 20 per cent. in volume. It is difficult to interest the towns to settle up the country about them, and this is easily done by a little attention to their interests. There are always other advantages. So, in every long settled district there are lands for sale, and an immigrant house where those who want to sell, and those who want to buy naturally come together is a great convenience. And further those who have one degree of courageous attention to those who come to east their lot with us. In the early spring, immigrants will be arriving in swarms and every enterprising town ought to offer some sort of attraction to them. There is no locality which has not room and which would not be better off for new population.

In an article on the speakership the question now attracting so much attention at Washington and in all parts of the country the Boston Advertiser says: "It is highly important that the constitutional law with the documents qualified to do it should be passed. So very decided action is required in the department of taxation. Possibly the democratic party is qualified to undertake it, but the party is not. But that party owes to itself and the country a resolution of its expediency and of its desirability. The choice of Mr. Randall would prevent a declaration of the party's intentions no till after the presidential election. Republicanans generally do not believe that the dems are to congress have the courage to adopt a fiscal policy. The election of Mr. Carville would give the majority a chance to develop a policy. It would prevent the drama of casting the blame of a failure to do something upon the shoulders of a protestant speaker. I will be for the general advantage of the democrats to force out of the cover, which now shelters them and compelled like the republicans, to fight in the open field. And that is nothing at present which will contribute as much to the change in the position of the democratic party as will the election of Mr. Carville."

"In fact," the writer says, "it has been decided by all judges that no proclamation for thanksgiving was ever issued by a president of the United States in words once so grateful and devout as those of President Arthur which call the nation to thank God for the twentieth of November."

It may not be necessary to make a statement of being thankful too far, I am thinking, but it could not be forgotten among our reasons for giving thanks to day that we have direct railroad communication with our old home opened for the first time during this year.

PRISON LABOR

At the Oregon penitentiary little opportunity is found to make the prisoners earn much toward their own support. The industries in which they can be employed are very few, and many of the prisoners are necessarily kept in idleness. The contract system has been employed to some extent but even that is met by protests from persons who complain that prison labor is thus brought into competition with the labor of the honest and industrious classes.

Proposed to abolish the contract labor system in the prisons of the state of New York received the popular endorsement at the recent election by a large majority. The result was due to the feeling on the part of the working classes that the prison contract system forces them into competition with the outside labor. The custom thus founded was continued through the colonial days, and after the revolution the governors of the New England states continued to appoint an annual Thanksgiving day. During the revolution a national Thanksgiving was appointed annually by congress and after the adoption of the constitution Washington appointed a national Thanksgiving, believing as he said that no other nation had been so evidently protected by the divine favor.

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